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Professor J. Lederberg
 Stanford University
S t a n f o r d, Calif.,
 U.S.A.

Amsterdam, 23rd September 1963

Dear Professor Lederberg,

I have been advised to approach you for your authoritative advice upon a problem and I should greatly value your opinion.

Following our publication of Prof. Imshenetsky's paper, presented at the 1962 Washington Space Symposium⁺, we have had many discussion about 'Exobiology' with scientists in Europe and America. A strong body of opinion favours the creation of a single Journal in this field wherein could appear papers on subjects like; the detection and chemistry of extra-terrestrial life-forms (including studies of meteorites), the effects of conditions in space on primitive forms of life, and the techniques for preventing pollution by terrestrial micro-organisms.

It was felt that, with an increasing amount of work being done by scientists in the field of general Space Research the growth of vigorous new sub-disciplines was inevitable and indeed, desirable. The ex-biologists, ex-physicists and ex-chemists working in say, exobiology, would need a single journal as a means of communication with other groups of exobiologists. Although the science might or might not be sufficiently well-established to warrant such a journal on the bookshelves now, the long gestation period required before such a journal was established meant that there was little time to lose.

For myself, I too feel enthusiastic about this project because I believe that an extension of Man's travels into space is an inevitable consequence of his curiosity and adventurous spirit. Given this, the development outlined above seems logical enough from the layman's point of view.

As a publisher, however, I am extremely worried by the flood of scientific output of publications and hesitate to launch yet another journal unless I can establish that the eminent

⁺ Life Sciences and Space Research, North-Holland Publishing Co., 1963

men in this particular field are generally in favour of the idea.

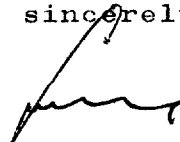
I would therefore ask you, firstly, for your opinion on the need for a journal on exobiology. If you believe the need exists, then your ideas and thoughts on the scope of such a publication would be of great value (the suggestions given above are, of course, only talking points).

For example, Prof. Imshenetsky suggests in his papers, that exobiological studies would throw light upon the central problem of biology--- the origin and evolution of life. If this aspect were to become as important as say, RNA/DNA work is now, it would be foolish to exclude it, a priori, from the journal. Do you feel that it could be included, however, without the publication becoming the battleground of almost irreconcilable views on the origin of life?

Assuming that your feelings towards the journal are positive, would you yourself be interested in taking an active part in framing the editorial policy, and in the journal itself? Further are there others who you would like to see as editors or members of the international editorial advisory board? In particular, can you suggest any scientist whose presence as an editor would ensure a minimum of trouble with publication of previously classified work?

I think that the foregoing outlines our feelings and some of the problems we expect to meet. I should be happy to hear your reactions. As publishers, we may propose courses of action but it is the scientific community which must determine whether these are valuable and should be pursued.

Yours sincerely,



E. van Tongeren, Drs.,
Director.

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